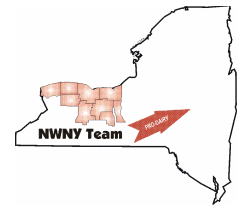


# NWNY Dairy, Livestock & Field Crops Team

Cornell Cooperative Extension

Serving the counties of:

Genesee ♦ Livingston ♦ Monroe ♦ Niagara ♦ Ontario ♦ Orleans ♦ Seneca ♦ Wayne ♦ Yates



## IMPACT STATEMENT

### Discussion Groups: *MOPED of Ontario County*



#### The Need

The dairy business continues to change. Dairy owners are faced with fluctuating dairy prices and ever increasing costs. Profitability can be difficult without improving many areas of the dairy enterprise almost simultaneously.

Managers have limited time to fully investigate new methods and technologies whether involving managing people, cattle or nutrients. Access to experts, hearing from leading producers first hand or seeing examples of profitable change can be difficult for individuals

to arrange by themselves. Discussion groups offer a friendly, local forum to bring these tools to dairy producers and foster peer discussion and evaluation.

#### Extension's Response

The Dairy Specialists of the NWNY Team have facilitated an existing dairy discussion group centered in Ontario County known as MOPED, (Modern Operators of Progressive Expanding Dairies). Over the last three years the interest and participation of this group has been rekindled. Six monthly dinner meetings with presentations occur between October and March. An annual bus tour along with smaller group trips take participants on in-depth tours of farms with exceptional management. Tours have focused on nutrient management, robotic milkers, farm expansion, composted bedding packs and manure digesters. Coordination with USDA Wildlife Services has helped bring starling control projects to members whose barns have been inundated with birds in the cold weather.

#### The Results

The MOPED group has increased in membership from 48 to 56 in the last two years. The level of activity and participation has increased by one-third to one-half over the last three years. Corporate sponsorship of speakers, motor coach charters, meals and incidental supplies has significantly improved as well. An increase in the number of agribusiness membership and attendance at functions has been noted. This has aided programming efforts in addition to opening doors for financial and human resources.

A new 200 cow robotic milking barn has been opened by a MOPED member who went on the Canadian robotic milker tour last year and found valuable information. Improved cow cooling systems have sprung up with the resources presented at a meeting on the subject in early 2005. Manure storage system development has been helped by on site inspection and contact information gained during tours. Dramatic reduction in starlings occurred after late winter programs were established on 4 member farms. Close relationships developed through this MOPED effort have provided the NWNY Team with producers willing to host on farm programs including Hoof Care, Calf Specialist, Feed Manager and AI and Reproduction.

Possibly less economically significant, but satisfying to all involved are the relaxed, informal opportunities for dairy producers, agribusiness reps and extension to talk and exchange ideas, plan future venues and develop a list of resources.